BATMAN
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ROBIN
GRANT
BREYFOGLE
MITCHELL

IDENTITY CRISIS
PART TWO:
WITHOUT FEAR OF CONSEQUENCE...
BATMAN
MERRY CHRISTMAS, SUCKERS! HO HO HO!
GRACEY
"The donning of a mask is believed to change a man's identity and faculties, for the assumed appearance is held to affect the wearer's inner nature and to assimilate it to that of the being represented by the mask."
--ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION

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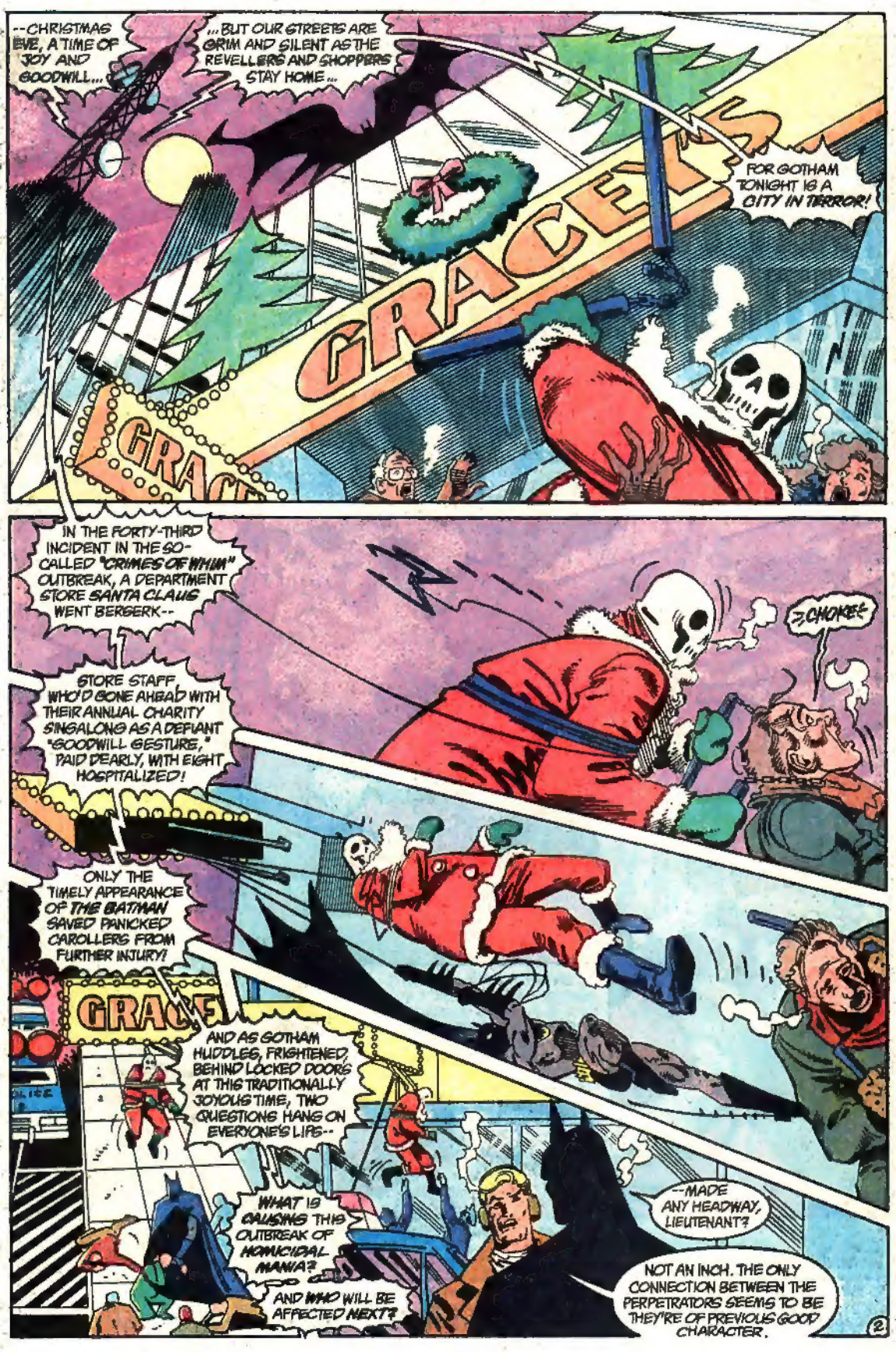
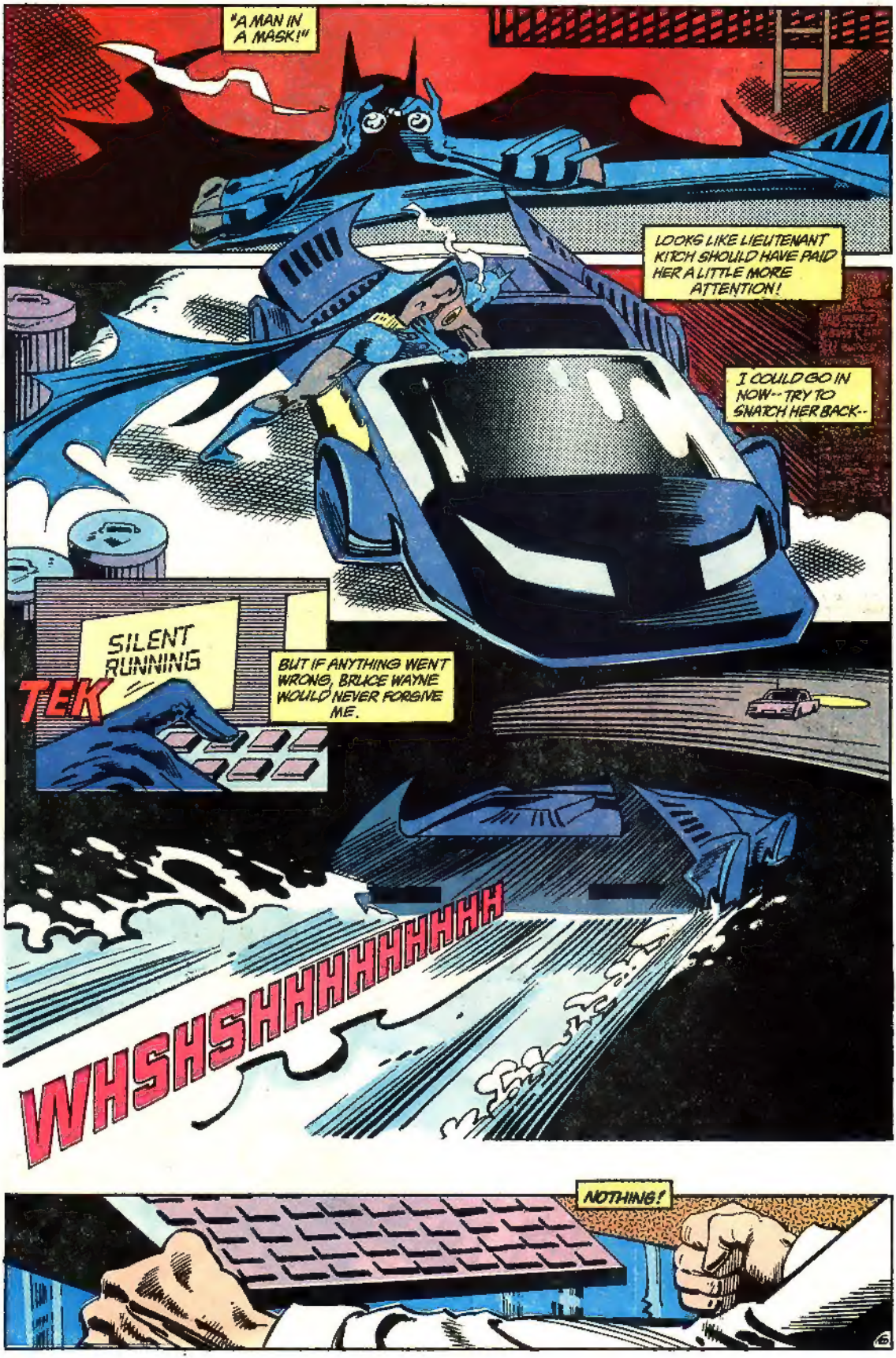
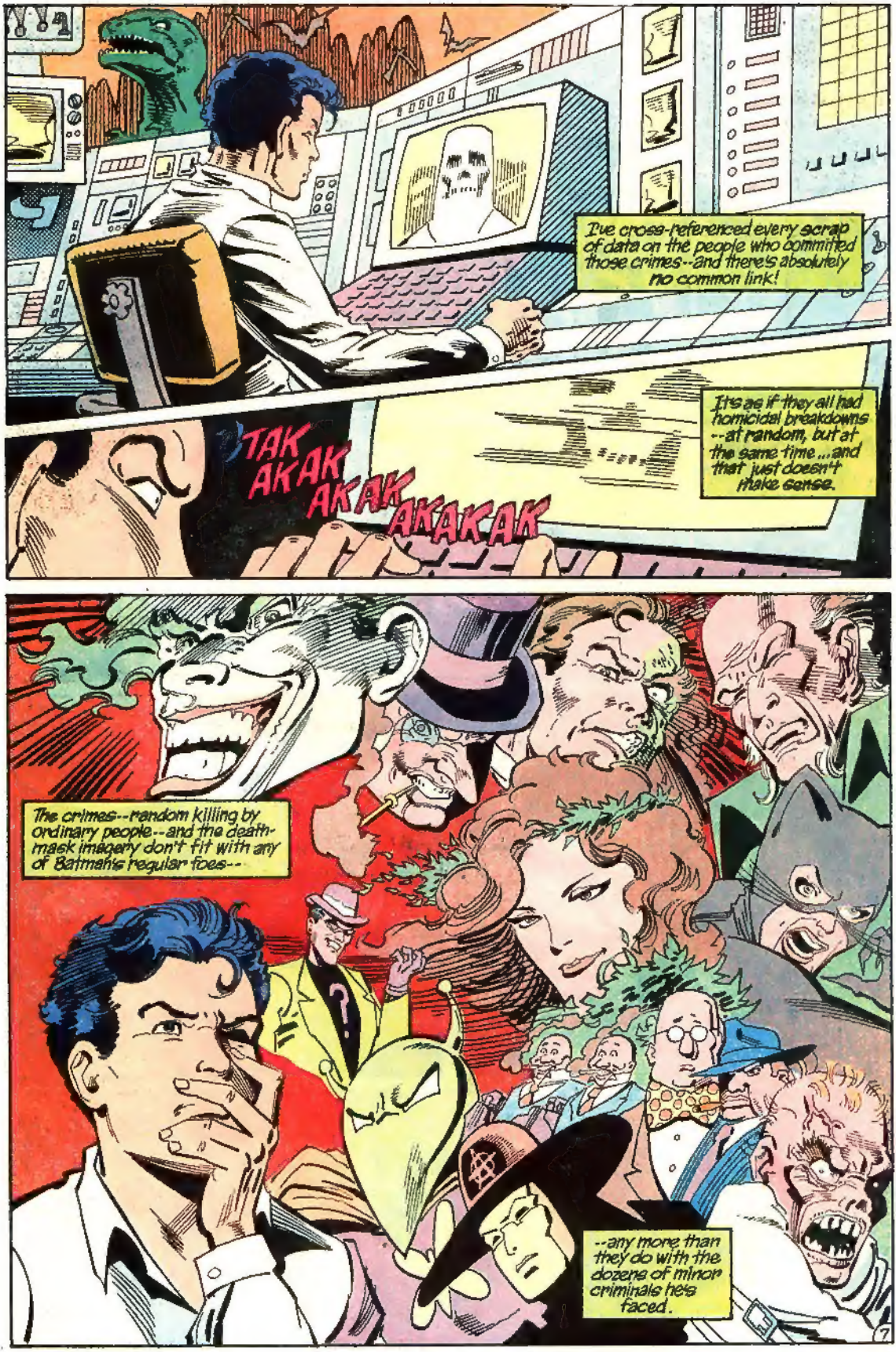

--CHRISTMAS EVE, A TIME OF JOY AND GOODWILL...
...BUT OUR STREETS ARE GRIM AND SILENT AS THE REVELLERS AND SHOPPERS STAY HOME...
FOR GOTHAM TONIGHT IS A CITY IN TERROR!
GRACE
IN THE FORTY-THIRD INCIDENT IN THE SO-CALLED "CRIMES OF WHIM" OUTBREAK, A DEPARTMENT STORE SANTA CLAUS WENT BERSERK--
STORE STAFF, WHO'D GONE AHEAD WITH THEIR ANNUAL CHARITY SINGALONG AS A DEFIANT "GOODWILL GESTURE," PAID DEARLY, WITH EIGHT HOSPITALIZED!
ONLY THE TIMELY APPEARANCE OF THE BATMAN SAVED PANICKED CAROLLERS FROM FURTHER INJURY!
AND AS GOTHAM HUDDLES, FRIGHTENED, BEHIND LOCKED DOORS AT THIS TRADITIONALLY JOYOUS TIME, TWO QUESTIONS HANG ON EVERYONE'S LIPS--
WHAT IS CAUSING THIS OUTBREAK OF HOMICIDAL MANIA?
AND WHO WILL BE AFFECTED NEXT?
CHOKE!
--MADE ANY HEADWAY, LIEUTENANT?
NOT AN INCH. THE ONLY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PERPETRATORS SEEMS TO BE THEY'RE OF PREVIOUS GOOD CHARACTER.
2

YOU'VE TAKEN BLOOD SAMPLES? TESTED FOR TOXINS?
FORENSICS IS ON 24-HOUR OVERTIME. ALL THEIR TESTS SAY ZILCH! NO GO ON THE HYPNOSIS FRONT, EITHER.
IN FACT, CLOSEST WE'VE COME TO A LEAD WAS A CLAIM FROM A MISS VALE--
VICKI VALE? THE PHOTOGRAPHER?
YEAH. SHE'D BEEN WATCHING ONE OF THOSE OLD '60'S MOVIES, FIGURED SHE'D FOUND A CLUE IN A PICTURE SHE TOOK.
'COURSE IT WAS ALL A FANTASY. GUY SHE SUSPECTED CHECKED OUT CLEAN.
MIND TELLING ME WHO...?
A MR. MARCUSE--RUNS A FUR BUSINESS OVER ON DEERE STREET. UPRIGHT, RESPECTABLE CITIZEN.
UP TILL TONIGHT, SO WAS SANTA CLAUS!
GOTHAM'S A GHOST TOWN. THE BRIGHT LIGHTS PLAY TO EMPTY STREETS. SILENCE HANGS LIKE A GHOUL.
VICKI VALE'S AN EFFICIENT LADY. IT'S NOT LIKE HER TO MAKE A MISTAKE...

THOUGH IT IS JUST LIKE HER TO STICK HER NOSE IN WHERE IT ISN'T NEEDED!
KRAK!
--BOWDLER, VINCENT S., 334 EAST RIVER APARTMENTS.
GOT IT, MR. MARCUSE!
THAT'S THE LAST THREE. BETTER GET GOING--I SAID THEY'D ALL BE DONE BY MIDNIGHT!
LOOKS LIKE YAZZ HAS CAUGHT A SNOOPER, MR. M!
IT SEEMS MY SUSPICIONS ABOUT MARCUSE ARE WELL-FOUNDED--THOUGH A FAT LOT OF GOOD THAT'LL DO ME AGAINST THIS PSYCHO!
SMASH
OHH--!
D-DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! I'M WARNING YOU--!
ALL RIGHT, YAZZ. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS.
4

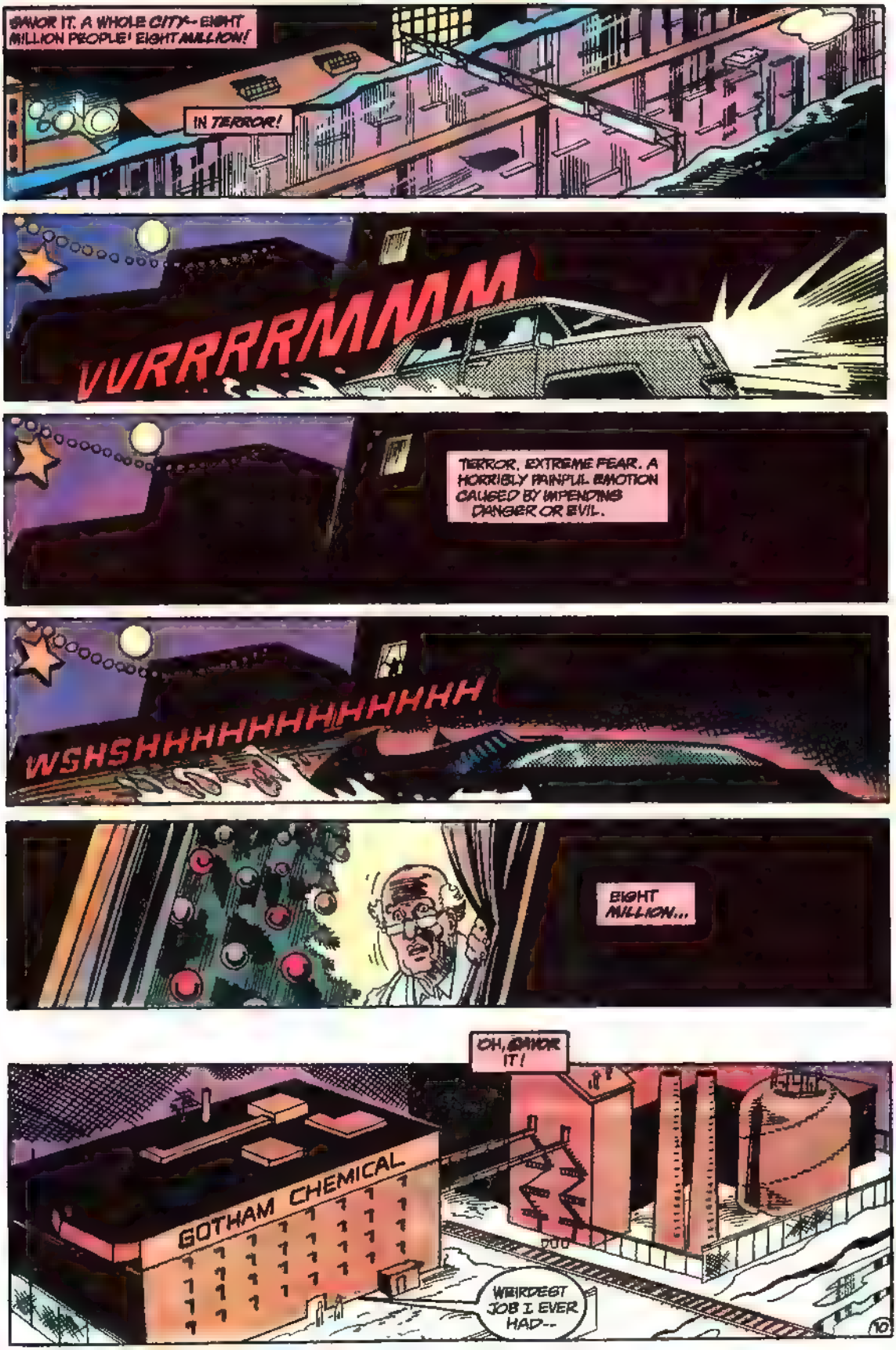
WHAT YOU DOING, WEARING THAT THING ANYHOW?
JUST HAVIN' A LITTLE FUN, MR. MARCUSE! I CAUGHT HER CHECKIN' OUT YOUR CAR.
ALL RIGHT. GET THAT STUFF DELIVERED.
AND NO FOUL-UPS!
HEY, BOSS--THIS IS A PRESS CARD! SHE'S A JOURNALIST!
I REMEMBER YOU NOW. THE BUMS THIS MORNING...!
I GUESS I SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE THERE. THOUGH I HAD TO BE SURE IT WORKED, YOU UNDERSTAND.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, MISTER!
I WAS OUT FOR A WALK WHEN THE GOON IN THE DEATH-MASK ATTACKED ME. YOU BETTER HAVE A GOOD LAWYER, PAL, BECAUSE I'M GOING TO SUE--
PERHAPS YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH. PERHAPS NOT. WHICHEVER, IT'S TOO LATE NOW.
PUT HER IN THE CAR!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?
TO SEE A MAN, MISS VALE...

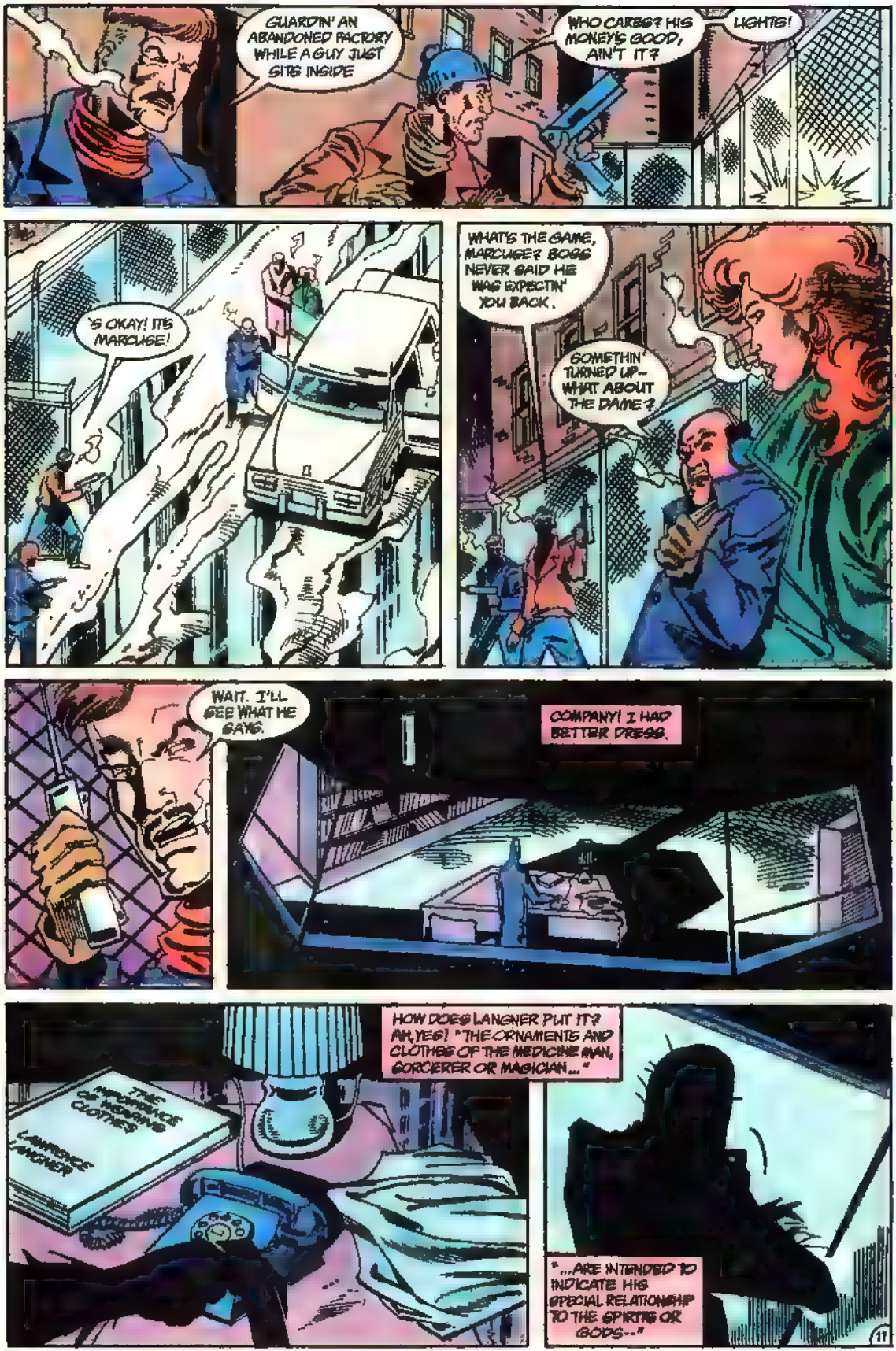

"A MAN IN A MASK!"
LOOKS LIKE LIEUTENANT KITCH SHOULD HAVE PAID HER A LITTLE MORE ATTENTION!
I COULD GO IN NOW--TRY TO SNATCH HER BACK--
SILENT RUNNING
TEK
BUT IF ANYTHING WENT WRONG, BRUCE WAYNE WOULD NEVER FORGIVE ME.
WHSHSHHHHHHHHH
NOTHING!
6


I've cross-referenced every scrap of data on the people who committed those crimes--and there's absolutely no common link!
It's as if they all had homicidal breakdowns--at random, but at the same time...and that just doesn't make sense.
TAK AKAK AK AK AKAKAK
The crimes--random killing by ordinary people--and the death-mask imagery don't fit with any of Batman's regular foes--
--any more than they do with the dozens of minor criminals he's faced.
7

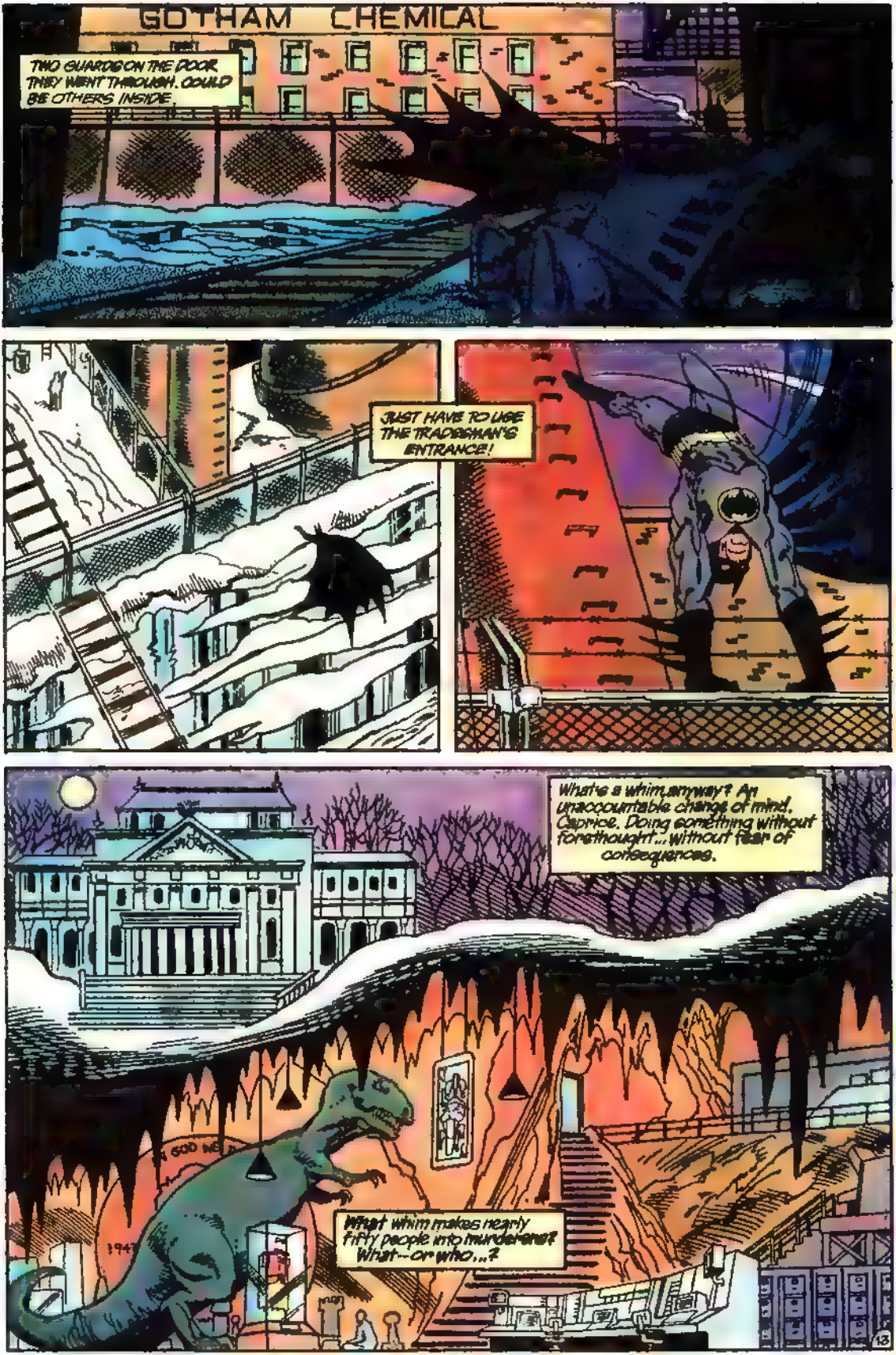
I thought when Batman forbade me to wear the suit, I could prove I'd earned the right by solving this crime for him. But it's just not working out.
At this rate, there's never going to be another Robin!
AHEM!
OH. HI, ALFRED!
BROODING ON WHAT CANNOT BE IS NO WAY FOR A BOY TO SPEND CHRISTMAS EVE, MASTER TIM!
I WONDERED IF PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO HELP ME WRAP SOME PRESENTS...?
CHRISTMAS...! I'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN, WHAT WITH MY MOTHER'S-- WITH THE FUNERAL, AND THE MURDERS IN THE CITY!
I COULD SURE USE A BREAK...
...BUT I CAN'T AFFORD ONE. GUESS I'LL HAVE TO SIT CHRISTMAS OUT THIS YEAR.
CONGRATULATIONS, SIR. I'M SURE IT'LL BE THE FIRST OF MANY!

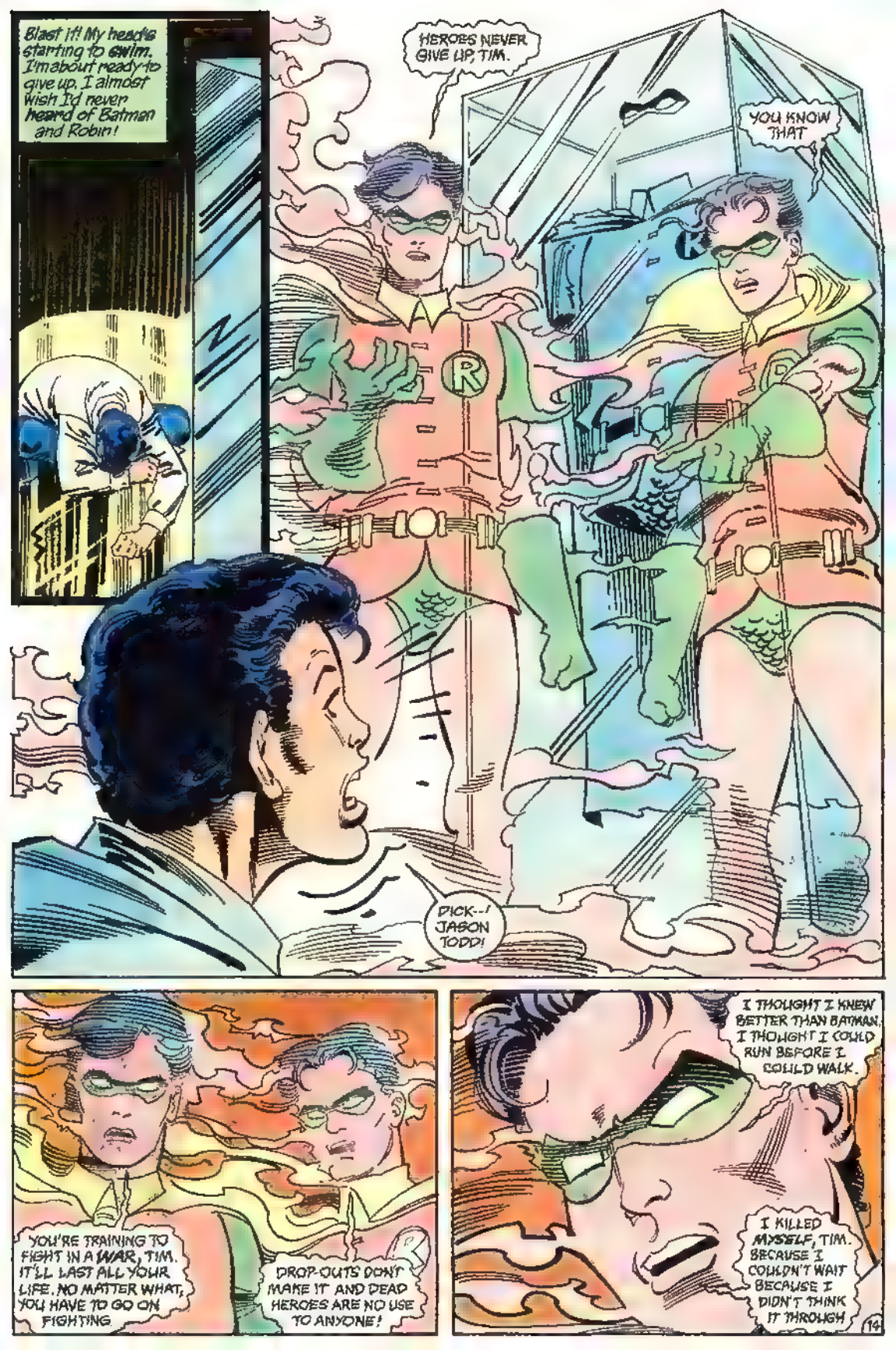
THERE'S AN ANSWER TO THIS MYSTERY SOMEWHERE--
--AND IF BATMAN'S EVER GOING TO ACCEPT ME, I HAVE TO FIND IT!
The suit! If only I could...
The suit is magic. It gives you power. It hides your weakness. It makes you give it everything you've got.
It makes you a hero.
If only I could!
Think, Tim! What makes a grandmother shoot four men--on a whim? What makes a man turn on people he's worked with for years?
THINK!

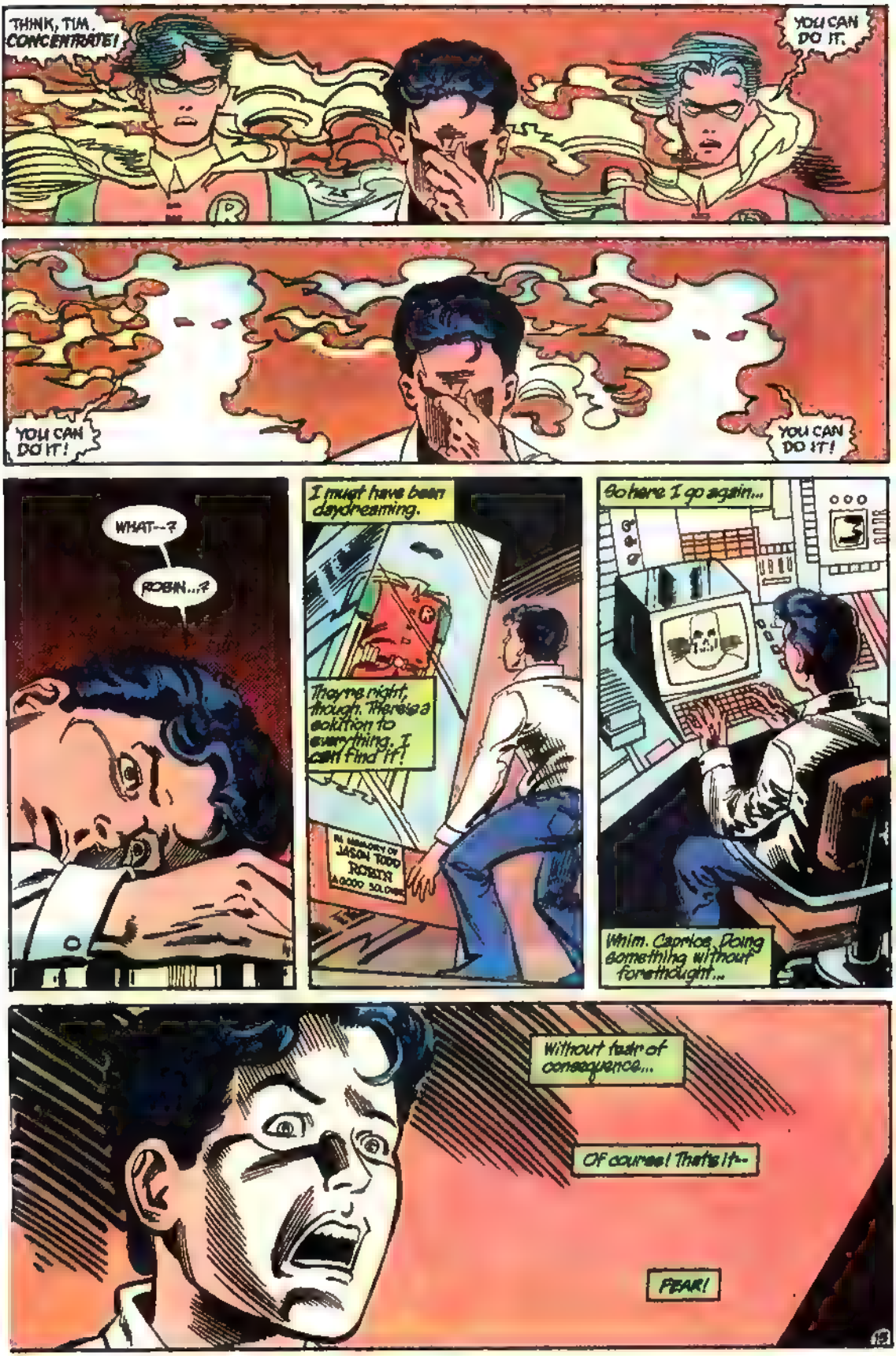

SAVOR IT. A WHOLE CITY-- EIGHT MILLION PEOPLE! EIGHT MILLION!
IN TERROR!
VVRRRRMMMM
TERROR. EXTREME FEAR. A HORRIBLY PAINFUL EMOTION CAUSED BY IMPENDING DANGER OR EVIL.
WSHSHHHHHHHHHHH
EIGHT MILLION...
OH, SAVOR IT!
GOTHAM CHEMICAL
WEIRDEST JOB I EVER HAD--
10

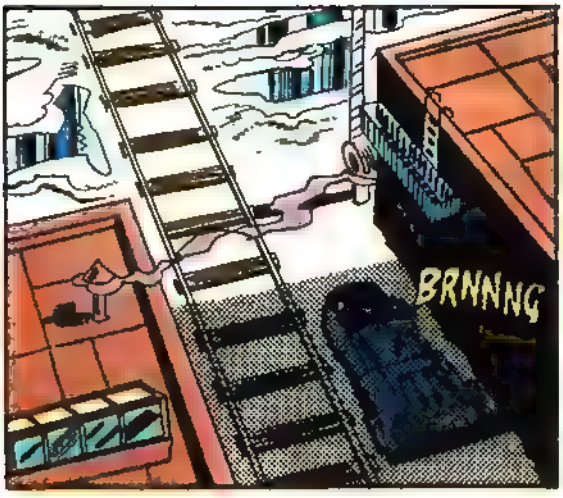

GUARDIN' AN ABANDONED FACTORY WHILE A GUY JUST SITS INSIDE
WHO CARES? HIS MONEY'S GOOD, AIN'T IT?
LIGHTS!
'S OKAY! IT'S MARCUSE!
WHAT'S THE GAME, MARCUSE? BOSS NEVER SAID HE WAS EXPECTIN' YOU BACK.
SOMETHIN' TURNED UP-- WHAT ABOUT THE DAME?
WAIT. I'LL SEE WHAT HE SAYS.
COMPANY! I HAD BETTER DRESS.
THE APPEARANCE OF MODERN CLOTHES
LAWRENCE LANGNER
HOW DOES LANGNER PUT IT? AH, YES! "THE ORNAMENTS AND CLOTHES OF THE MEDICINE MAN, SORCERER OR MAGICIAN..."
"...ARE INTENDED TO INDICATE HIS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE SPIRITS OR GODS--"
11

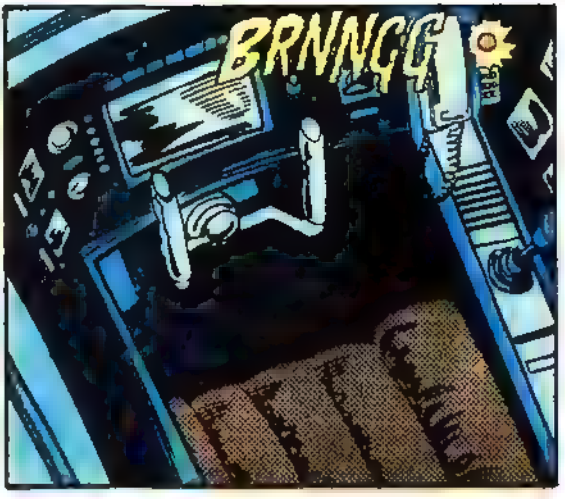
"AND HIS CONTROL OR POWER OVER THEM."
HOOOAAAAAAARRRR
YOU RATS! I'LL SEE YOU'RE ALL JAILED FOR THIS!
QUIT STRUGGLIN', SWEETHEART--
MMMPFFMM!
BOOT
OUTTA THE WAY, JAKE!
IF I CAN FIND A WINDOW TO THE OUTSIDE--
BLAST! WHICH ONE?
TAKE A CHANCE, VICKI--
OHH--!
Y-Y-YOU...!
12


GOTHAM CHEMICAL
TWO GUARDS ON THE DOOR. THEY WENT THROUGH. COULD BE OTHERS INSIDE.
JUST HAVE TO USE THE TRADESMAN'S ENTRANCE!
What's a whim, anyway? An unaccountable change of mind. Caprice. Doing something without forethought... without fear of consequences.
What whim makes nearly fifty people into murderers? What--or who...?
13


Blast it! My head's starting to swim. I'm about ready to give up. I almost wish I'd never heard of Batman and Robin!
HEROES NEVER GIVE UP, TIM.
YOU KNOW THAT.
DICK--! JASON TODD!
YOU'RE TRAINING TO FIGHT IN A WAR, TIM. IT'LL LAST ALL YOUR LIFE. NO MATTER WHAT, YOU HAVE TO GO ON FIGHTING.
DROP-OUTS DON'T MAKE IT AND DEAD HEROES ARE NO USE TO ANYONE!
I THOUGHT I KNEW BETTER THAN BATMAN. I THOUGHT I COULD RUN BEFORE I COULD WALK.
I KILLED MYSELF, TIM. BECAUSE I COULDN'T WAIT BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK IT THROUGH
14


THINK, TIM. CONCENTRATE!
YOU CAN DO IT.
YOU CAN DO IT!
YOU CAN DO IT!
WHAT--?
ROBIN...?
I must have been daydreaming.
They're right, though. There's a solution to everything. I can find it!
So here I go again...
Whim. Caprice. Doing something without forethought...
Without fear of consequence...
Of course! That's it--
FEAR!


BRNNNG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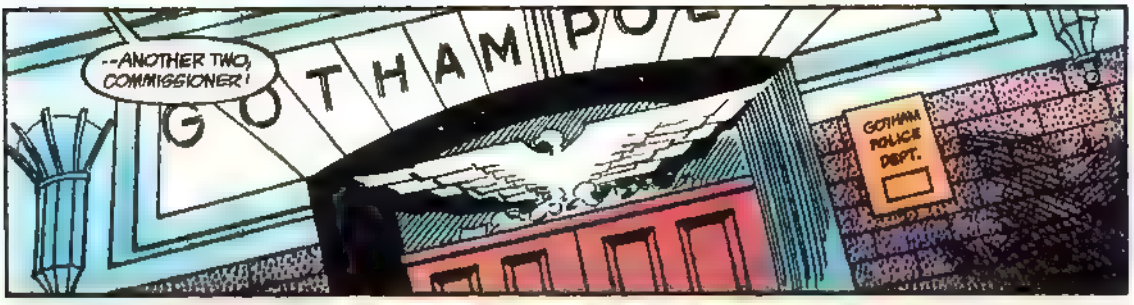
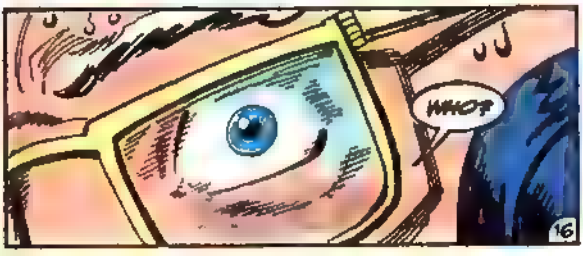
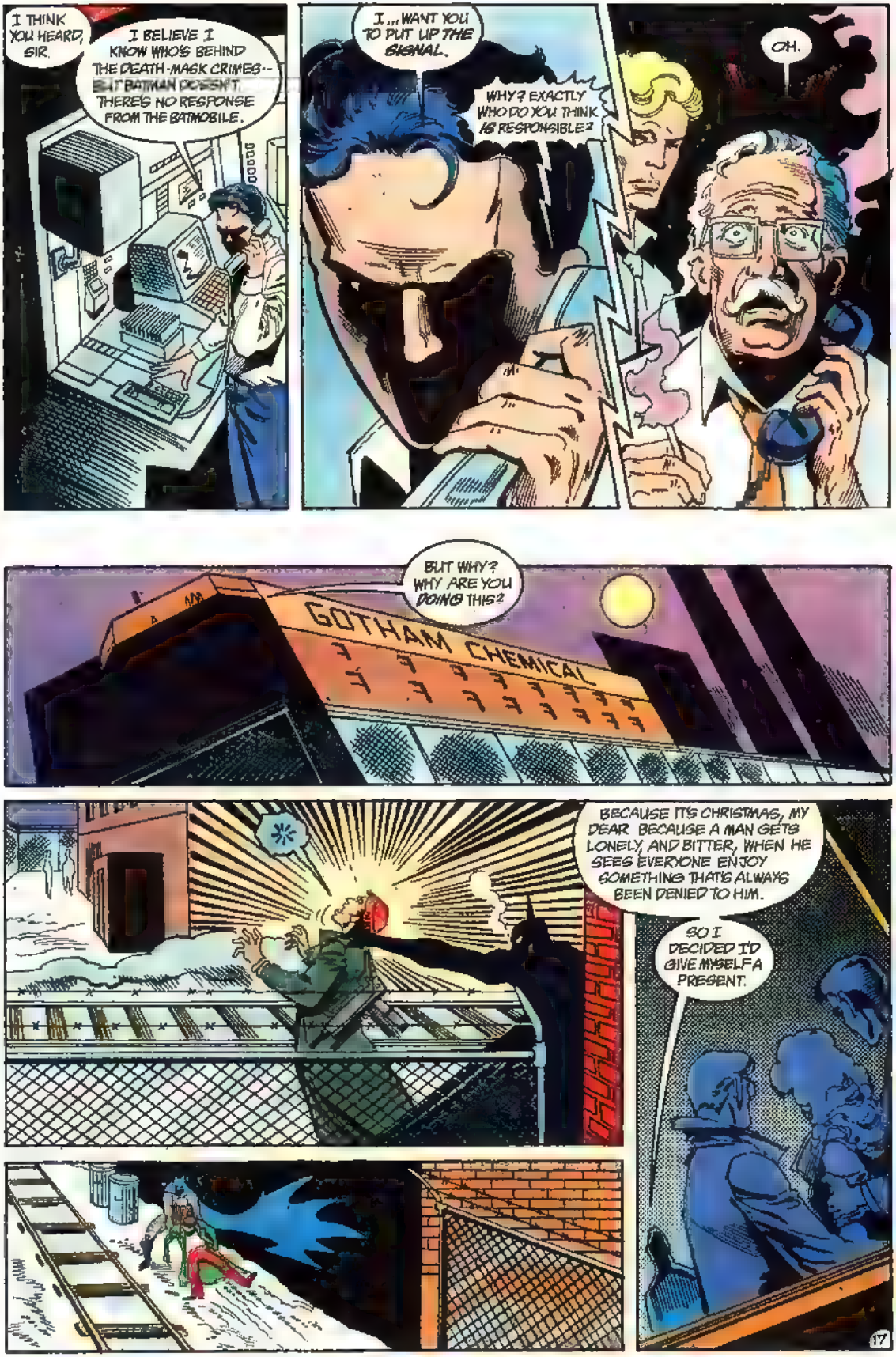
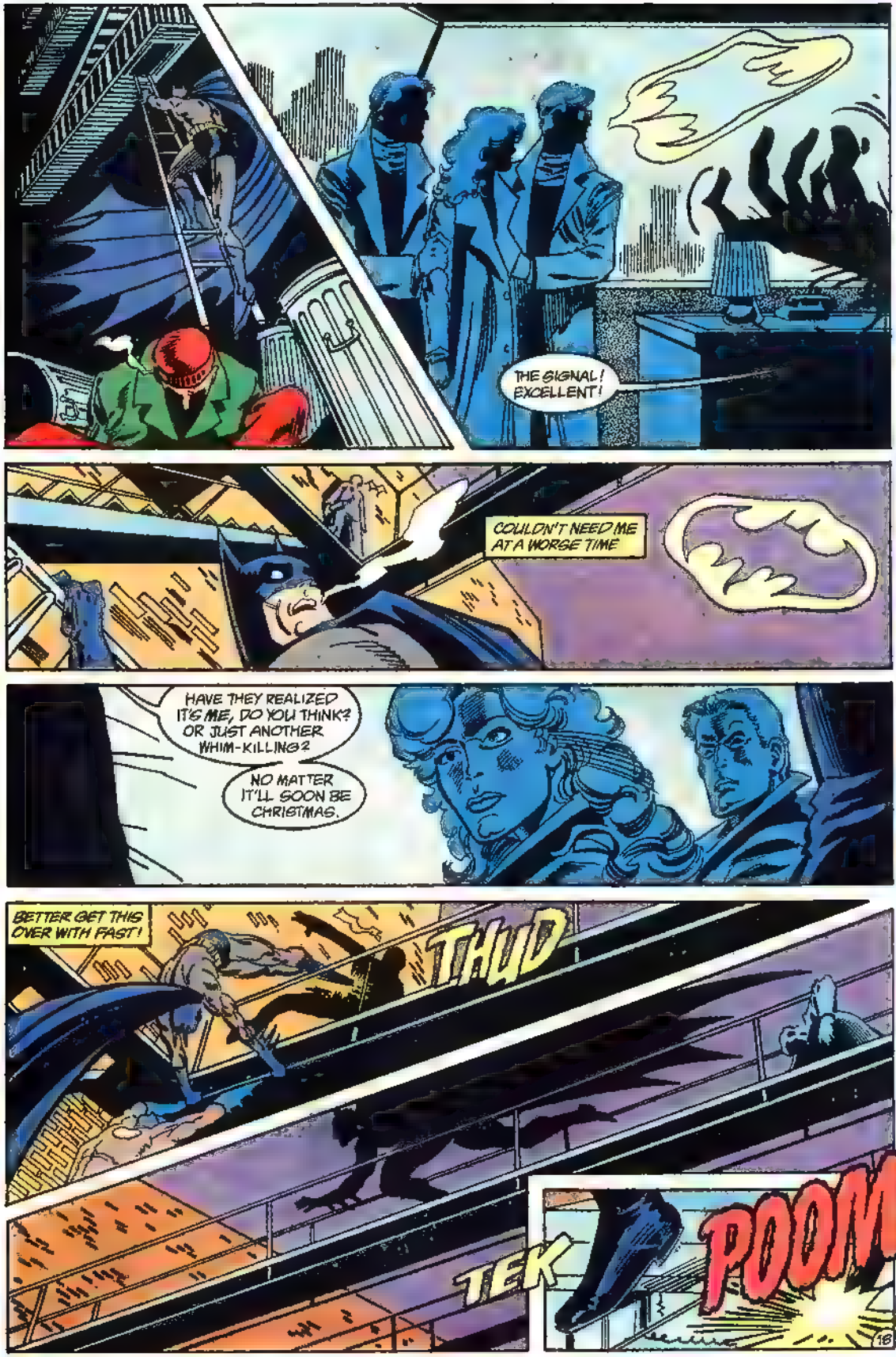

--ANOTHER TWO, COMMISSIONER!
GOTHAM POLICE DEPT.

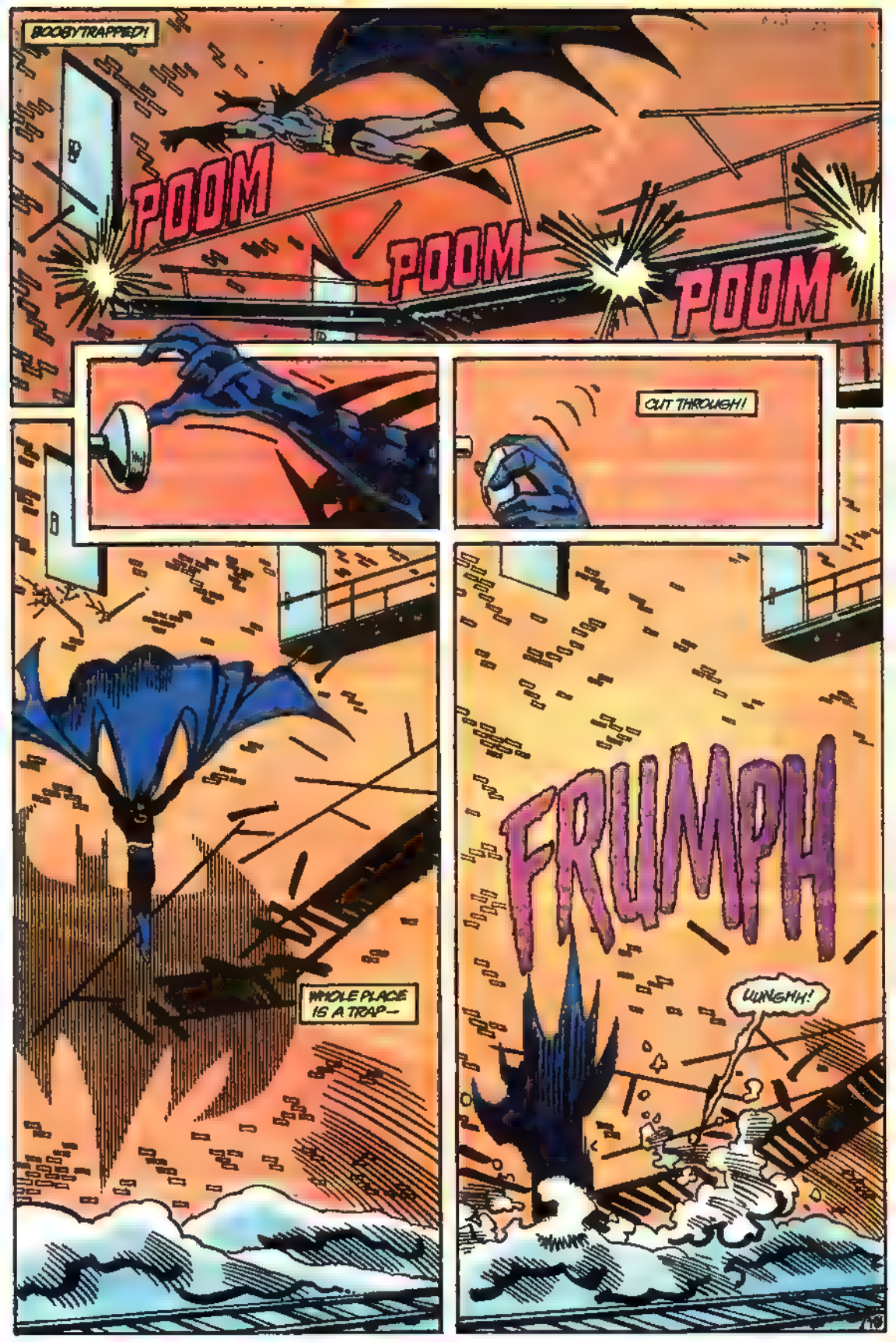
A VINCE BOWDLER SET FIRE TO HIS PARENTS' HOUSE OVER ON EAST RIVER. IT'S SPREAD TO THE WHOLE BLOCK, AND A T.V. REPAIRMAN'S HOLDING SIX HOSTAGES ON PARKSIDE.
IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE, KITCH!

NO THREATS--NO RANSOM DEMANDS, IT'S ALMOST AS IF IT'S... A NATURAL OCCURRENCE!
EXCUSE ME. YES, GORDON SPEAKING--

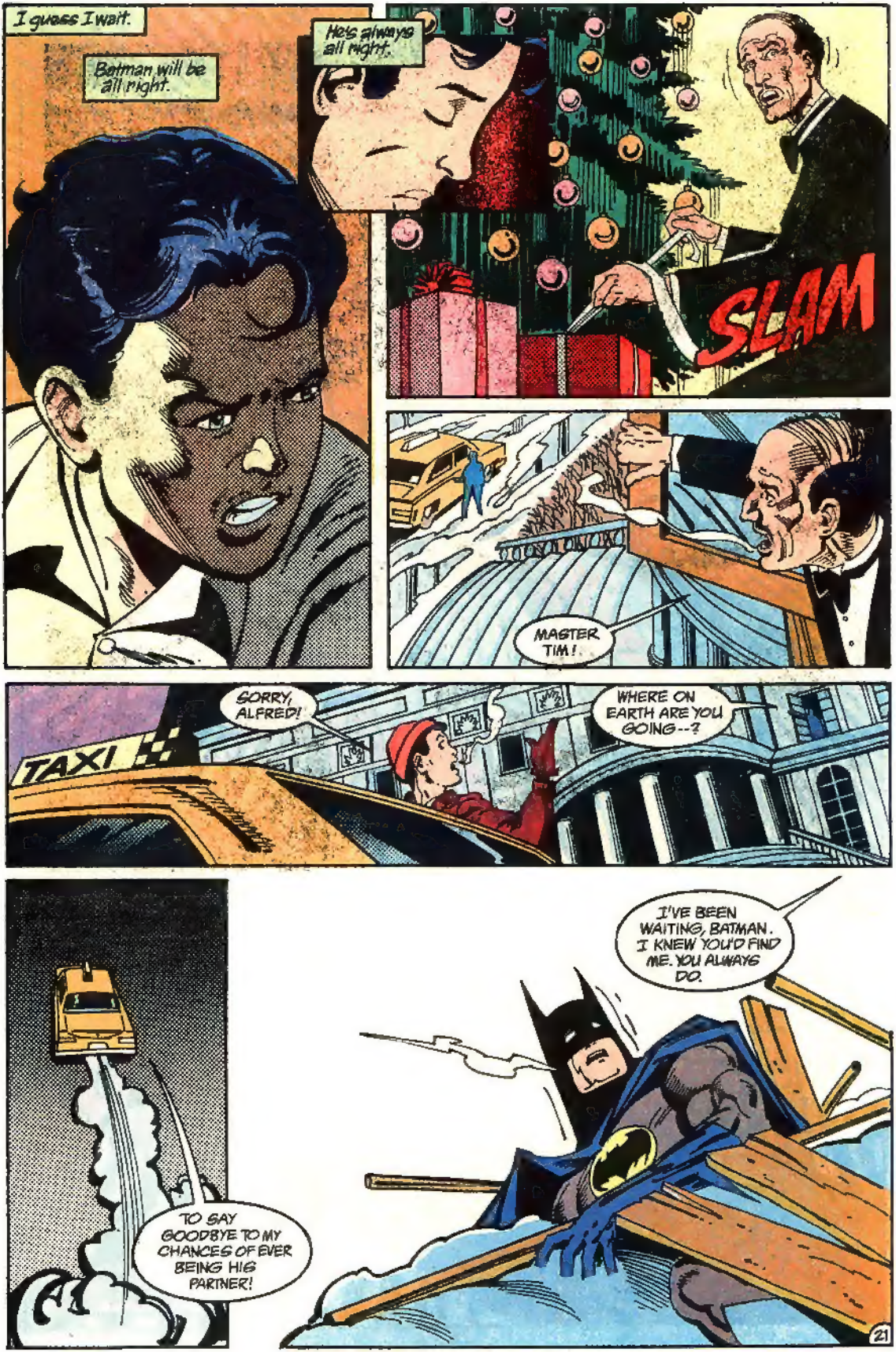

WHO?


I THINK YOU HEARD, SIR.
I BELIEVE I KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THE DEATH-MASK CRIMES-- BUT BATMAN DOESN'T. THERE'S NO RESPONSE FROM THE BATMOBILE.
I...WANT YOU TO PUT UP THE SIGNAL.
WHY? EXACTLY WHO DO YOU THINK IS RESPONSIBLE?
OH.
BUT WHY? WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
GOTHAM CHEMICAL
BECAUSE IT'S CHRISTMAS, MY DEAR. BECAUSE A MAN GETS LONELY, AND BITTER, WHEN HE SEES EVERYONE ENJOY SOMETHING THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN DENIED TO HIM.
SO I DECIDED I'D GIVE MYSELF A PRESENT.
17


THE SIGNAL! EXCELLENT!
COULDN'T NEED ME AT A WORSE TIME
HAVE THEY REALIZED IT'S ME, DO YOU THINK? OR JUST ANOTHER WHIM-KILLING?
NO MATTER IT'LL SOON BE CHRISTMAS.
BETTER GET THIS OVER WITH FAST!
THUD
TEK
POOM


BOOBY TRAPPED!
POOM
POOM
POOM
CUT THROUGH!
WHOLE PLACE IS A TRAP—
FRUMPH
UUNGHH!

--LAST TIME THEY MET HE WAS USING AN OLD FACTORY OUT IN THE INDUSTRIAL AREA. COULD YOU SEND UNITS OUT THERE RIGHT AWAY?
LISTEN, ROBIN--IF THAT'S WHO YOU REALLY ARE! I'VE A MAJOR FIRE AND A HOSTAGE SITUATION IN PROGRESS--AND GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE BY NOW!
I CAN'T PULL MEN AWAY ON SOME THOUSAND-TO-ONE SHOT. I'LL SEND A CAR AS SOON AS I CAN.
MEANTIME, DON'T WORRY. BATMAN CAN LOOK AFTER HIMSELF.
YES, SIR. I UNDERSTAND.
He's in trouble. I know it.
He can take care of himself--if he knows what he's up against. But he didn't even suspect...
I could put on the suit--go look for him myself. But then--
--what if I failed? I'd bring shame to something that's a lot more than just me.
YOU'RE NOT READY. YOU STAY HERE.
DISOBEY ME--AND YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT BEING ROBIN FOREVER!
So what do I do? If I'm right, I could be saving his life.
If I'm wrong--it would be the end of everything.
20


I guess I wait.
Batman will be all right.
He's always all right.
SLAM
MASTER TIM!
SORRY, ALFRED!
WHERE ON EARTH ARE YOU GOING--?
TAXI
TO SAY GOODBYE TO MY CHANCES OF EVER BEING HIS PARTNER!
I'VE BEEN WAITING, BATMAN. I KNEW YOU'D FIND ME. YOU ALWAYS DO.
21

AND NOW MY CHRISTMAS IS COMPLETE!
HOOOHOHOOOOOAAA

BAT-SIGNALS

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We're down to one page this month, so let's take time out from letters about our regular books and cover a few other special Batman items, beginning with DIGITAL JUSTICE.

*****

Dear DC,

I've just finished reading DIGITAL JUSTICE. What can I say except ASTOUNDING! This is by far the best graphic novel I've seen so far. The artwork is so great that I can't even begin to put it into words. Who would have thought that a computer would be capable of such a feat. Hats off to Pepe Moreno, whose true creative genius helped to bring the whole thing about. The pictures are so perfect that they almost look real! You've actually outdone yourselves this time.

When I first saw flyers for DIGITAL JUSTICE, I have to admit I was skeptical. That was all banished when I got my hands on the book. I flipped through the pages and was overcome with amazement. I just couldn't believe it! Then I started reading it. The story was great! Aside from the monthly Batman titles, this is the best thing I've seen. DIGITAL JUSTICE surpasses ARKHAM ASYLUM, which was a hit as well.

As I sit here writing this letter and glancing through DIGITAL JUSTICE (I can't seem to keep my hands off it!), an idea comes to mind. How about coming out with a new series which chronicles the exploits of James Gordon—the Batman of the future? To do the series on computer as well would be great. It might take time, but it would really be a hit in the long run. Think about it. It might work.

A Bat-Fan always
Mario Strus
Linden, NJ

*****

Dear Bat-People,

I recently finished DIGITAL JUSTICE and I'm impressed—one hell of a book. Visually it's one of the best things I've seen—a work of rare beauty, those colors. My compliments to all involved, and a round of applause for Pepe Moreno.

Take care,
J.A. Lancaster
96 Dorchester Road
Weymouth, Dorset DT4 7JY
ENGLAND

We have no current plans to continue the adventures of this Batman from the future—but you never know!! And if you haven't yet picked up your copy of DIGITAL JUSTICE, the hardcover is still available at your friendly neighborhood comics shop! And if the hardcover is a bit out of your budget, a softcover version will be available in 1991!

And now, a couple of comments about this year's BATMAN ANNUAL . . .

*****

Dear Denny,

Holy Maturity! Being a 13-year-old boy, I can tell you that Robin (I and II) does not represent the average pre-teenager! Not once did Dick or Jason mention girlfriends, peer pressure, pimples, or drugs. I have a few suggestions for ROBIN III.

—No more "holy _____!" It just downplays serious situations.
—Better haircut. The greased-back, straight-do went out with the '60s!
—Get Tim a love interest, so he has domestic and social qualities, as well as his alter ego!
—Tim is a handsome, intelligent, tall, and interesting guy. Girls should be swarming around an eighth grader like that.
—Give Robin a reason to help Bats. Whether it's reconnaissance, computers, belt, or just helping in battle, don't let him become what Dick was in the '60s—a whining nuisance, yet always tugging at Wayne's sleeve.
—Let's see more of Timothy as a person and less as an alias.

Jonah Horwitz
Chicago, IL

Okay, you guys have waited long enough. Robin (Tim Drake) will be the star of his own 5-issue miniseries, beginning in November. It's written by Chuck Dixon (his first series work for DC) and illustrated by Tom Lyle (STARMAN) and Bob Smith (THE HUNTRESS). AND, major changes WILL be made in the Robin character, as we know it. What changes? Well, we can't tell you yet, but we can tell you that Tim Drake makes his first "real" appearance as Robin. . . .

*****

NEXT ISSUE! Batman is on the verge of death at the hands of the Scarecrow! Tim Drake appears as Robin! Are these two events related? What do you think? I We KNOW you'll be here in 30 days to see what Alan Grant, NORM Breyfogle, and Steve Mitchell have cooked up!

Also be on the lookout for these other Batman appearances: DETECTIVE ANNUAL #3 written by Archie Goodwin, PENCILLED BY Dan Jurgens, and inked by Dick Giordano; the long awaited BATMAN ARCHIVES (it's finally out!); entries on the Batmobile, the Penguin, Poison, Ivy, and the Riddler in WHO'S WHO #5; and BATMAN 3-D, an 80-page graphic album featuring an all-new story written and drawn by John Byrne, a classic Batman 3-D story, and 3-D pin-ups by Arthur Adams, George Perez, Jerry Ordway, David Gibbons, Mike Zeck, Jim Aparo, Mike Mignola, Alex Toth, Barry Windsor-Smith and many others! And if that isn't enough, there's always our "regular" DETECTIVE and LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT titles, with the former currently featuring a special mystery-within-a-mystery by John Ostrander, Mike McKone, Flint Henry, and Jose Marzan (with covers by the "legendary" Dick Sprang!) and the latter starring Hugo Strange and the Catwoman in a 5-part story by Doug Moench, Paul Gulacy, and Terry Austin. Whew!

—KC Carlson
Still plugging away

From the Den

A recent letter chided me for the excessively personal nature of this column—the many personal pronouns in sentences that relate what I'm thinking, feeling, having for breakfast these days. It's a criticism I'm sensitive to. I've been embarrassed when colleagues have strutted their egos across the public prints, particularly when they claim a grandeur of achievement not everyone agrees with. And I'm annoyed when so-called "new journalists" confuse acknowledging a subjective element to their work—admitting prejudices, biases, and limits of perception—with writing about themselves.

On the other hand, as a reader I like editor cat yronwode's "Fit to Print" editorials in the Eclipse magazines and writer Peter David's "But I Digress . . ." feature in The Buyer's Guide, both of which are intensely personal.

Many, if not most, people enjoy reading others' letters and diaries. That's why Samuel Pepys' words appear in literature textbooks and volumes of correspondence burden library shelves.

Finally, shouldn't comics consumers have a chance to get a sense of the people who influence the stories they enjoy (or loathe)? Get a glimpse of the personalities behind the words and pictures, provided it doesn't interfere with the work?

Maybe not. Maybe such glimpses always get between reader and page. (I hate meeting authors whose books mean much to me. I'm afraid that if I don't like them, I'll stop liking their prose.) If so, is this good or bad?

You tell me.

By the way, there are twelve personal pronouns in the foregoing paragraphs. And for breakfast, I usually have coffee and pancakes. (Oops . . . *thirteen* personal pronouns.)